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ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study was made of Prairie City, Iowa wherein the personal and social characteristics of the 1962 power actor pool were compared with characteristics of the 1973 power actor pool to test the hypothesis that: the personal and social characteristics of power actors will not change significantly over time. Procedures for identifying Prairie City power actors in both 1962 and 1973 involved interviews with: (1) external identifiers; (2) internal identifiers; and (3) the power actors themselves. Power actors (25 in 1962 and 33 in 1973) were querried as to: (1) the amount of social power other power actors and themselves possessed in specific issue areas; (2) their social participation in organizations; (3) role expectations of power actors; (4) bases of social power of power actors; and (5) their personal and social characteristics. Variables tested were: age; education; occupational prestige; income; length of residence in community and State; political orientation; number of memberships in local community organizations; and number of memberships in noncommunity organizations. Findings supported the general hypothesis but indicated that the power actors themselves were likely to change over time, as only 8 of the original power actors were among those identified in 1973. (JC)

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CHANGING POWER ACTORS IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY

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CHANGING POWER ACTORS IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY*

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INTRODUCTION

Social change has been occurring at a rapidly increasing rate. The social, economic, and technological changes continue to have a significant impact on social systems at all levels in our American society. At the local community level, these social changes affect the community power structure and the decision-making processes.

One of the concerns of change agents, community leaders, and citizens is the extent to which social changes have affected decision-making structures at the local level. Have the social changes resulted in altering the power actors who make major policy decisions in communities to affect the direction social change takes at the local level? Have these changes resulted in greater representation among the community power actors of community sectors not traditionally represented in community decision-making structures; e.g., lower economic levels, minorities? Or have the individuals represented in the community power actor pool changed, but the occupational, income, educational, and social participational levels that they represent remained relatively constant? The changing nature of community power actor pools is of primary concern to change agents, community leaders, and citizens who desire to improve the quality of life in the local community.

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The changing nature of community power actors is the focus of this paper. In 1962, a team of researchers at Iowa State University initiated a research project on the comparative analysis of community social power in five rural Iowa communities. This project involved the development of a theoretical framework for the purposes of guiding research on social power in community and county social systems. The five communities in which the social power model was operationalized ranged in population size from 600 to 5,000. The research findings and their implications for change agents have been provided in various monographs, professional papers, unpublished doctoral dissertations, and unpublished masters' theses. (Powers, 1963, 1965; Bohlen, Beal, Klonglan, and Tait, 1964, 1965, 1966; Tait, 1964; Marshall, 1965; Tait and Beal, 1965; Tait and Bohlen, 1967; Jenkins, 1966).*

In 1973, Iowa State University initiated a restudy of the largest community, Prairie City, studied in 1962. Because comparable research designs were used at both times, it is possible to conduct a longitudinal analysis to determine the changing nature of community social power over time.

The major objective of this paper is to compare the personal and social characteristics of the power actor pool in 1962 and 1973.

A SOCIAL POWER MODEL

The social power model developed in 1962 was used as the basic framework for guiding the power actor research during both periods. Only a brief summary of the major concepts and some of their interrelationships are presented here.

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*The community social power research project was initiated and implemented in 1962 as one part of a larger research project -- Sociological Studies in Civil Defense. The Project Co-Directors for this research project were Dr. George M. Beal, Dr. Joe M. Bohlen, and Dr. Gerald E. Klonglan who are members of the faculty in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Dr. John L. Tait served as Task-Area Coordinator for the community social power research project. Other research team members who made significant contributions to the development and testing of the social power model were Dr. Ronald C. Powers and Dr. Quentin Jenkins. Dr. Powers is Assistant Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University. Dr. Jenkins is Associate Professor of Sociology at Louisiana State University. Mrs. Billie Jo Haskins (present address not known) made a significant contribution in operationalizing the social power model in one of the five communities.

Social Power

Social power is defined as the capability to control the behavior of others. In social systems such as communities, the ability to control the behavior of others is differentially distributed among people. Social power is not randomly distributed among the community's population.

Sources of social power are the various bases that give a power actor the capability to control the behavior of others. The sources of social power may be classified into two major categories; namely, authority and influence.

Authority is the capability to control the behavior of others as determined by the members of the social system. Established authority always resides in a status-role and not in the individual as such. The incumbent of a status-role or office cannot take the authority with him upon leaving the office.

Influence is that capability to control the behavior of others that is not formally designated by the social system. The capability of an actor (or actors) to influence others resides in the individual actors and their facilities, rather than in the formalized status-roles of the specific social system. Some examples of facilities which give actors the capability to influence others are human relations skills, intelligence, wealth, control of mass media, reputation, religious affiliation, past authority positions, status within a church, family prestige, and past achievements. Influence also results from the fact that certain individual actors get into a superordinate position in relation to others because of their ability to exert their wills in relation to these subordinates and to bring sanctions to bear in ways that are beyond the authority given to them by the system if the subordinates do not conform to their wills.

Power Actors

Power actors are the actors of the social system who are perceived to have social power and affect the community decision-making processes. They are perceived to have more social power than other actors with which to affect community decisions. The social power that community power actors have may depend upon the interaction of various sources of social power.

Power Structure

A power structure is that pattern or relationships among individuals that enables the individuals possessing social power to act in concert to affect the decision-making of the social system on a given issue area. To clarify the concept, individuals working separately toward a common goal in the social system without communication among the individuals does not constitute a power structure. In many communities, there are several power structures. The power actors who affect the decision-making process in government may differ from the power actors who decide the course of industrial development. There may also be opposing power structures within an issue area that offer alternative courses of action. A general power structure that legitimizes most social action programs may not exist.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In discussing what other social scientists have found to be the relationship between power actors and their personal and social characteristics, Miller (1952) found, in a northeastern community, that influence seemed to be based upon the possession of social property or other resources or proficiencies.

Hunter (1953) discussed the occupational differences between power actors in the upper and under power structures of his study of Regional City. The upper power structure was found to comprise power actors who were primarily economic dominants. In contrast, the under power structure was found to be made up of professionals and individuals in elected authority positions.

Belknap and Smuckler (1956) interviewed both leaders and nonleaders in a midwestern community. They concluded that occupational position was the most important determinant of leadership in comparison with other individual characteristics.

In reviewing the works of the Lynds, Mills, and Hunter, Bell (1960) suggested that power actors had characteristics nor representative of the general population. Bell suggested that they are predominantly: 1) men, 2) native born and white, 3) born into a business or professional family, 4) have a college education, and 5) have high prestige, and 6) high income.

In a study of Lansing, Form and Sauer (1960) found that four-fifths of the community influentials were businessmen. They also found that the typical influential had completed college and that almost half of the influentials were between the ages of 51 and 60.

Miller (1961) suggests, from his study of Pacific City, that the local government was a relatively weak power center, with businessmen exerting the predominant influence in decision-making.

On the basis of power studies completed in American communities, Schermerhorn (1961) concluded that nongovernmental leaders tended to have more power in community affairs than leaders in official authority positions. He also concluded that businessmen constituted the predominant occupational sector of the community power structure.

Powers (1963), in his study of a rural midwestern community, compared the personal and social characteristics of power actors with those of a random sample of the total population. He concluded from this study that influentials had a higher median income and amount of formal education. He also found influentials on the whole to be members of the Methodist Church and to own their own businesses.

Thometz (1963) found from the Dallas study that persons with authority positions tended not to appear among the top decision-makers. Key power actors in Dallas were found not to participate in the formal aspects of organizations, although they held memberships in many associations.

Clelland and Form (1964) concluded from their research of community power and power actors that economic dominants tended to withdraw from political offices and, later, from other civic associations in the community.

Bohlen, Beal, Klonglan, and Tait(1964), in a study of Prairie City compared the personal and social characteristics of the power actors with a random sample of the general population. Power actors were found to differ significantly on occupations. They also found that the power actors were more likely to be Republican in their politician orientation, to have a higher income, to have more formal education, and to be older.

In El Paso, D'Antonio and Form (1965) found the strongest interest group to be the CCC (City-County Committee) composed of approximately 200 of the leading businessmen and professionals. Here again, the men who were perceived to have the most social power to affect the community decision-making process were not the men with occupations representative of elected authority positions.

Merton (1968), in his study of Rovere, identified two types of power actors with differing types of social characteristics. Localities tended to confine their interests to the community, tended to be typically concerned with knowing as many people as possible, and their influence rested on an elaborate network of personal relationships. In contrast, cosmopolites were significantly oriented toward the world outside the local community. They had little interest in meeting as many people as possible, and their influence rested on their prestige of previous achievements and previously acquired skills.

This review of social power studies, as well as others, indicates that much of the research has dealt only with power actors and their occupational status. Little has been done to examine the educational, income, political, and social participation characteristics of power actors. Also, most studies have not been longitudinal; therefore, the occupational statuses and other personal and social characteristics of power actors have not been examined on a comparative basis over time.

METHODOLOGY*

In 1973, a restudy was carried out in the community of Prairie City. During the past decade, Prairie City declined in population from 4,501 to 4,376, or -2.8 percent.

Field Procedures

The field procedures for identifying the power actors in Prairie City in both periods involved three phases. They included interviews with 1) Step 1 Community Knowledgeables, 2) Step 2 Community Knowledgeables, and 3) Power Actors.

Step 1, Community Knowledgeables

During this phase, knowledgeables were interviewed to provide 1) names of persons in the community who would have a broad knowledge of community decision-

*Throughout this paper, the names of communities and counties referred to as a part of this study are pseudonyms.

making processes, 2) background information on past and present community issues, and 3) names of persons whom they perceived to be power actors.

In 1962, this phase consisted of five interviews. All Step 1 knowledgeables lived outside Prairie City. They included a former county agent, two newspaper editors, a businessman, and a veterinarian.

In 1973, it was no longer necessary to contact external sources of information since there were sufficient contacts from the original study in 1962. Because of this situation, three interviews were conducted with most of the knowledgeables living within Prairie City. The three interviews included a former county extension agent (not the same as in 1962), a businessman, and a group interview with five area and county extension staff who have conducted educational programs in the community. Two of the five were members of the area extension staff and lived approximately 30 miles from Prairie City.

Step 2 Community Knowledgeables

After the interviewing of Step 1 knowledgeables was completed in both periods, a list of Step 2 knowledgeables was delineated as having a broad knowledge of community decision-making processes. These knowledgeables were interviewed with a formal field schedule at both times. The Step 2 knowledgeables were asked to name persons they perceived to have the most social power in different issue areas.

In 1962, 16 knowledgeables were interviewed. They represented various sectors of the community, which included education, agriculture, communications, labor, politics, business, and government. During the second step in 1973, 18 knowledgeables were interviewed. The various sectors of the community which were represented were education, agriculture, communications, politics, business, government, law, religion, and health.

Power Actors

In 1962, as well as in 1973, individuals who received three or more mentions by Step 2 knowledgeables in either general affairs, industry, or politics were arbitrarily established as the pool of power actors.

In 1962, 26 individuals were delineated, with 25 being interviewed. In 1973, there were 38 individuals delineated, with 33 being interviewed. Eight individuals were delineated as power actors in both 1962 and 1973.

Power actors at both times were interviewed with a formal field schedule. They were asked to give information about the following: 1) the amount of social power other power actors and themselves possessed in specific issue areas, 2) their social participation in organizations, 3) role expectations of power actors, 4) bases of social power of power actors, and 5) their personal and social characteristics.

ANALYSIS

As stated, the major objective of this paper is to investigate the longitudinal changes that have occurred in the personal and social characteristics of the power actor pool in 1962 and 1973. The expected relationship to be tested for this paper is stated in the general hypothesis:

> G.H. 1: The personal and social characteristics of power actors will not change significantly over time.

The variables to be tested under this general hypothesis are age, education, occupational prestige, income, length of residence in community and state, political orientation, number of memberships in local community organizations, and number of memberships in organizations outside the local community.

The variables in this analysis are operationalized in the following manner:

1. Age was measured by the power actors' actual age.
2. Education was measured by the actual number of years of formal education the power actors had attained.
3. Occupational prestige was measured by Duncan's Social Economic Status Index. Some power actors in both studies were women who gave their occupation as housewife. To assign them a position on the occupational index, the head of household's occupation was used to obtain their occupational designation.
4. Income was measured by placing the power actors' actual income into one of eight income categories with (1) indicating the lowest income category and (8) indicating the highest income category. Because of the longitudinal nature of the analysis, 1962 power actors' incomes

were adjusted for inflation. This was accomplished by multiplying the 1962 incomes by 1.341. This figure is a result of dividing the 1962 consumer price index into the 1973 consumer price index.

5. Length of residence in community and state was measured by the power actors' actual number of years of residence in the community and state.
6. Political orientation was measured by the power actors' choice of nine statements on a continuum that best described their own political orientation. These statements were 1) conservative Republican, 2) liberal Republican, 3) independent, but close to conservative Republican, 4) independent, but close to liberal Republican, 5) independent, 6) independent but close to conservative Democrat, 7) independent, but close to liberal Democrat, 8) conservative Democrat, and 9) liberal Democrat.
7. Number of memberships in local community organizations was measured by summing the total memberships in local organizations.
8. Number of memberships in organizations outside the local community was measured by summing the total memberships in organizations outside the local community.

The empirical hypotheses tested were:

E.H. 1: The age of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 2: The formal education of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 3: The occupational prestige score of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 4: The income of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 5: The length of residence in community of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 6: The length of residence in state of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 7: The political orientation of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 8: The number of memberships in local organizations of power actors will not change significantly over time.

E.H. 9: The number of memberships in organizations outside the local community of power actors will not change significantly over time.

The statistical analysis used to test the general hypothesis of this paper is the student's t-distribution. This particular statistical test will compare the means of the variables in 1962 with the means of the variables in 1973 to determine whether there is any significant difference between the two periods.

If a significant t-value of a variable equal to or greater than the tabular (theoretical) t-value is obtained, it will be concluded that there is a significant difference between the means of that variable for the two periods. If a t-value for a variable is obtained that is less than the tabular (theoretical) t-value, then it will be concluded that there is no significant difference between the means of that variable for the two periods. The level of significance for testing the difference between means is the .05 level of probability.

FINDINGS

The personal and social characteristics of power actors in 1962 and 1973 are provided in Appendixes A and B of this paper. Table 1 presents the mean value (for both periods), the tabular t-value, and the theoretical t-value for each characteristic analyzed.

The results of the analysis show that the tabular t-values of all the characteristics were smaller than the theroetical t-value of 2.000. Because none of the nine empirical hypothesis were supported, it is concluded that the data support the general hypothesis that the personal and social characteristics of power actors will not change significantly over time.

TABLE 1. MEAN VALUES FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POWER ACTORS IN 1962 and 1973.[a]

CHARACTERISTIC	$\bar{x}$ 1962	$\bar{x}$ 1973	t VALUE[b]
AGE	50.8	49.6	0.43
FORMAL EDUCATION	14.3	14.9	-0.85
OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE	83.3	82.3	0.28
INCOME	$17,600.00	$18,727.27	-0.69
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN COMMUNITY	31.1	27.5	0.84
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN STATE	41.2	45.3	-1.03
POLITICAL ORIENTATION	2.4	3.3	-1.43
NUMBER OF MEMBERSHIPS IN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS	8.5	8.6	-0.13
NUMBER OF MEMBERSHIPS IN ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE LOCAL COMMUNITY	2.5	3.3	-1.34

[a]The t-test usually used for comparing two means are the paired t-test and the t-test for two independent samples. Our study with 8 individuals in both the 1962 and 1973 periods does not exactly fit either of these models. Standard least-squares procedures were used to examine the variation for the repeat measurement of the 8 individuals when predicting the power index. The model fitted included the characteristic, time, time X characteristic interaction, and dummy variables for individuals in both periods. For all characteristics in Table 1, the variation for individuals in both periods was not significant at the .05 level of probability when used in the multiple-regression model. In those cases, that variation for individuals in both periods is of substantive importance, adjustments to standard least-squares regression procedures for more appropriate tests are suggested by Fuller and Batlese (1973).

[b]To test the significance of the computed t-value, 56 degrees of freedom were used and resulted in a theoretical t-value of 2.000.

DISCUSSION

Although there was not a statistically significant change between the personal and social characteristics of power actors from 1962 to 1973, there was a slight tendency toward a more Democratic political orientation. During the same period, there was a tendency (although not statistically significant) toward an increased number of memberships in organizations outside the local community, although the number of memberships in local organizations within the community remained relatively constant. With the increased vertical orientation of local communities, there has been a tendency for the power actors in Prairie City to increase memberships and participation in organizations outside the local community, particularly newly created regional organizations such as regional planning, health planning, and the aging council.

Although there was only an overlap of eight power actors at the two periods, the occupations represented within the power actor pool changed only slightly. There was some evidence that one's being identified as a power actor in the community was in part a function of the power actor's status-role in a relevant community subsystem.

For example, the owner-editor of the commuinity newspaper was a key power actor in 1962. During the intervening period between 1962 and 1973, the owner-editor sold the newspaper to a regional newspaper chain. Although the former owner-editor was not identified as a power actor in 1973, the new managing editor of the absentee-owned newspaper was identifed as a power actor in 1973.

In both periods, businessmen and industrial leaders tended to predominate. During the intervening period there was an increased number of women identifed in the power actor pool (from two in 1962 to eight in 1973). Another differnence was the increased representation of the governmental sector in 1973 as compared to 1962 (from one in 1962 to four in 1973). This may reflect an increasing involvement of local government in community wide issues during the past 10 years.

Although generalizations cannot be made to other communities, the evidence, based on the longitudinal study of one rural midwestern community suggests to change agents that the individuals represented within the power actor pool do change over time, but that the personal and social characteristics of power

actors represented within the power actor pool change only slightly. Finally, since only eight identified as power actors in 1962 were among the power actor pool in 1973, these data suggest that change agents need to periodically re-identify the power actor pool. Although the personal and social characteristics of the power actors may remain relatively constant, the actual power actors who make community decisions are likely to change over time.

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Appendix A. Selected Personal and Social Characteristics of 1962 Power Actor Pool[a]

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupational Prestige	Income[c]	Years of residence in community	Years of residence in state	Political orientation[b]	Number of memberships in local organizations	Number of memberships in organizations outside local community
Dick Bolt	62	14	96	25,000+	29	29	1	9	1
Roger Beem	44	13	73	25,000+	17	22	1	9	1
Judge Unger	47	19	99	22,500	40	47	2	10	1
Vic Hahn	64	16	90	22,500	18	43	8	6	2
Frank Wink	44	12	73	13,500	17	17	5	11	1
Elsa Riddle	50	16	85	13,500	26	50	2	8	5
Francis Edel	63	12	85	13,500	51	63	1	7	6
William Fogle	57	15	72	13,500	57	57	1	8	4
Eli Fogle	33	15	79	7,000	33	33	3	8	3
Dick Polton	56	14	92	22,500	56	56	1	9	2
Bill Doby	57	14	93	17,500	44	57	2	9	1
Lon Barton	59	17	77	22,500	19	59	4	10	1
Ward Grey	35	13	90	10,500	9	9	4	9	0
Cary Holt	59	16	69	25,000+	59	59	2	9	2
Alvin Hall	59	19	99	25,000+	30	30	1	7	4

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Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupational prestige	Income[c]	Years of residence in community	Years of residence in state	Political orientation[b]	Number of memberships in local organizations	Number of memberships in organizations outside local community
Barry Polton	31	14	90	13,500	31	31	2	9	3
Tim Heinz	59	7	80	22,500	59	59	1	5	5
Alma Volt	49	16	79	10,500	24	32	2	7	7
Bryce Domm	43	12	84	22,500	16	16	5	15	1
Blaine Newell	53	13	96	25,000+	14	14	1	9	1
Jackson Bull	48	16	79	7,000	40	48	2	9	7
Paul Kohler	58	14	72	10,500	14	58	2	12	1
Jones Chilton	55	16	79	22,500	14	55	2	5	1
Van Fall	33	12	79	7,000	33	33	1	4	3
Barney Rollins	52	13	72	13,500	27	52	5	8	0

[a]The names appearing in this table are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the individuals who were interviewed.

[b]For appropriate political orientation position refer to operational measure of political orientation.

[c]In 1962, the field schedule was designed to gather the power actors' actual incomes. The 1962 incomes were adjusted for inflation by multiplying the 1962 incomes by 1.341. The adjusted incomes were placed in the same income categories which were used for collecting the 1973 data. The income values presented in Appendix A represent the mean values for each of the income categories.

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Appendix B. Selected Personal and Social Characteristics of 1973 Power Actor Pool[a]

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupational Prestige	Income[c]	Years of residence in community	Years of residence in state	Political orientation[b]	Number of memberships in local organizations	Number of memberships in organizations outside local community
Elsa Freemont	67	14	53	13,500	39	57	2	3	2
Edgar Reynolds	42	17	99	22,500	13	42	8	10	1
Paul Kohler	69	11	85	13,500	25	69	1	12	7
Edwin Freemont	66	12	96	13,500	58	58	1	6	3
Daniel Hendrickson	42	13	92	13,500	4	37	1	9	1
Alma Volt	60	16	92	13,500	35	37	No response	5	10
Ben Jennings	41	16	93	25,000+	9	41	1	10	4
Sue Horns	37	15	77	22,500	34	37	1	4	2
Ron Kirk	44	15	77	22,500	23	44	2	8	3
Eli Fogle	44	14	79	10,500	44	44	3	10	5
Roger Beem	55	14	73	25,000+	28	33	2	9	2
Harry Carlton	58	16	72	17,500	25	58	3	12	4
Thomas Janson	37	17	92	22,500	3	37	2	11	3
Les Martin	34	20	99	22,500	34	34	2	12	9

Appendix B. (cont.)

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupational prestige	Income[c]	Years of residence in community	Years of residence in state	Political orientation[b]	Number of memberships in local organizations	Number of memberships in organizations outside local community
Rachel Irving	61	12	67	7,000	40	61	9	7	2
Ed James	45	18	77	22,500	9	45	3	6	4
Oscar Benson	38	16	84	25,000+	14	38	No response	8	2
Stan Catton	53	16	93	25,000+	13	23	2	9	1
Russell Davis	42	12	93	17,500	27	31	9	14	2
Arney Cooper	46	12	61	10,500	46	46	3	9	3
Yancy Howards	31	19	56	10,500	31	31	2	10	2
Barney Rollins	64	13	77	17,500	37	64	3	10	2
Ward Grey	46	13	90	25,000+	22	22	5	18	2
Wilfred Schmidt	60	14	12	10,500	60	60	3	3	3
Darlene Detz	56	15	98	22,500	30	50	9	4	2
Ole Hartz	44	12	93	10,500	28	44	9	10	6
Ralph Riley	58	12	75	13,500	58	58	2	4	0
Judge Unger	56	18	99	25,000+	50	58	2	9	8

Appendix B. (cont.)

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupational prestige	Income[c]	Years of residence in community	Years of residence in state	Political orientation[b]	Number of memberships in local organizations	Number of memberships in organizations outside local community
Lee Lewis	41	19	99	17,500	14	41	2	11	3
Nancy Volt	34	16	85	25,000+	10	31	1	5	2
Vince Imhoff	41	16	96	25,000+	6	41	5	8	1
Yale Albertson	61	12	96	25,000+	5	61	2	7	1
Elsa Riddle	62	16	85	25,000+	34	62	2	10	8

[a]The names appearing in this table are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the individuals who were interviewed.

[b]For appropriate political orientation position refer to operational measure of political orientation.

[c]In 1973, the field schedule was designed to gather the appropriate income category for power actors and not their actual incomes. The income categories were (1) under $3,000, (2) $3,000 - 4,999, (3) $5,000 - 8,999, (4) $9,000 - 11,999, (5) $12,000 - 14,999, (6) $15,000 - 19,999, (7) $20,000 - 24,999 and (8) $25,000 and over. The income values presented in Appendix B represent mean values for each of the income categories.